

MEDIA RELEASE

Innovative training package for the residential aged care workforce

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Residential aged care homes throughout Victoria now have access to an innovative new education package designed to improve the lives of residents.

Called BERTIE – Better lives for residents through innovative education – the package has been designed and developed in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. It aims to build capacity and capability in the residential aged care workforce and supports both clinical and non-clinical staff to recognise and manage early signs of deteriorating health of residents.

The BERTIE project has been led by Murray PHN and co-funded by all six of Victoria's PHNs. Subject matter experts in the project team included 16 geriatricians, two First Nations clinicians/academics, a registered nurse/health coach, and a resident/consumer expert.

Dr Jesse Zanker, geriatrician at Aria Health and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, said key recommendations in the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety related to the educational needs and aspirations of hard-working aged care staff.

“BERTIE directly addresses these needs by providing a broad cross-section of educational content across 20 sub-topics, all related to the care of deteriorating or at-risk residents.

“It provides a fresh and novel approach to education. The aged care workforce is spread far and wide across the state, so education needs to be delivered in an easily accessible, on-demand and succinct online format.”

The training package is easy to digest and self-paced. Each of the 20 modules includes a short engaging video, summary sheet and quick quiz. Knowledge is tested immediately following the completion of each module, in line with best practice on consolidated learning.

BERTIE is free to all residential aged care workers in Victoria and NSW border communities that come under a Victorian PHN and is accessible via the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's ALIS platform.

Jesse emphasised the important task of peer review as part of developing the training package.

“We could not have asked for a more amazing contributor than Esmae Pimm. As an aged care resident herself, her perspective and experience were vital.”

Esmae, aged 99, peer reviewed key BERTIE modules. Her role was to carefully scrutinise the work produced by the subject matter experts to ensure it matched her experience of aged care. Esmae said peer reviewing work is a skill that requires concentration and a discerning eye.

“I'm no academic, but I have plenty of commonsense. And we could all do with more education.”

Matt Jones, Murray PHN CEO, said BERTIE offers the opportunity for the aged care workforce to upskill, assisting in the delivery of high-quality and safe care to residents.

“Through the recommendations from the Royal Commission, we saw the need to focus on ensuring residents are always at the centre of aged care.

“By completing BERTIE, aged care staff will be able to develop their skills, particularly around deteriorating conditions in residents, and therefore, support residents to receive appropriate and timely healthcare.”

The wide range of topics included in the BERTIE training package cover subjects such as pain assessment, communication, advanced care planning, how to assess acute deterioration, movement and mobility, and palliative care.

Jesse said the ultimate goal of BERTIE is to improve the lives of residents in aged care.

“This is also the goal of our hard-working aged care staff. Through BERTIE, we are providing some of the tools to help achieve this goal.”

For further information please contact communications@murrayphn.org.au

Photo caption:

Matt Jones, Murray PHN CEO, said by completing BERTIE, aged care staff would be able to develop their skills, particularly to support residents experiencing a deterioration in their condition.

Photo caption:

Jesse Zanker, geriatrician at Aria Health and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, said BERTIE provides a fresh and novel approach to education.

About PHNs and BERTIE contributors

The Victorian PHNs are part of a network of 31 Primary Health Networks around Australia working to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of primary healthcare and service systems. Across the state, we work with general practitioners, community health, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, pharmacy, aged care and allied health practitioners, and with acute services such as hospitals, specialists and emergency care. The role of PHNs is to help to support and integrate the work of these important services to ensure that the people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Dr Jesse Zanker is a geriatrician working at Aria Health and the University of Melbourne, consulting in many parts of regional Victoria. He has expertise in all aspects of geriatric medicine and has worked with Murray PHN and MediCoach to develop the BERTIE education package.

MediCoach is a training enterprise dedicated to helping health care teams optimise performance by expanding skills and knowledge to enhance capability and capacity. Kim Poyner is director and founder of MediCoach. She has worked with Murray PHN and a large team of subject matter experts to develop the BERTIE education package.